

Proposal

Text Amendment - Petition of Attorney Barry Knott (Applicant) seeking to repeal Section 5.3 in its entirety and substitute the proposed zoning text on Planned Residential District (PRD)

Overview

The Applicant is proposing to repeal Section 5.3 of Zoning Regulations titled, “Residence Apartments”, which includes standards for residences totaling eight or more families living independently of each other in apartments and meeting all of the requirements of Connecticut General Statutes (including tenement houses). Instead, the Applicant is proposing to include new zoning text on PRD within this section to encourage and accommodate multifamily development consistent with the character of the surrounding neighborhood.

Analysis

Location Analysis

Planned Residential Districts (PRDs), also commonly known as Planned Unit Developments (PUDs), are master planned communities routinely found in many suburban communities and infill urban centers. A PRD promotes cluster residential development with adequate provisions for common open space within the development, and promotes a development design that is compatible with the preferred design character of the neighborhood in which they are located. As explained in the enclosed petition, a PRD is an independent zoning district with its own use and bulk standard, and is not an overlay district.

The Petitioner proposes the establishment of PRD within the existing Two-Family District (RM-1 zone), on all single family residential parcels along the eastern and western sides of Broadbridge Avenue for a depth of 200 feet between Barnum Avenue to the south and Emerald Place to the north (zoned as RS-3 or RS-4 zone parcels currently), and on a parcel of more than one-acre that is adjacent to one of the aforementioned locations.

Enclosed is a map prepared by staff based on the description of PRD location. As can be seen, all of the parcels highlighted in blue boundary within RM-1 zone and along Broadbridge Avenue either within RS-3 or RS-4 zones (upto 200 feet in depth from Broadbridge Avenue between Barnum and Emerald Place), will be part of the proposed PRD. Also, not shown on this map, are locations closer to these parcels of more than one-acre which could possibly be developed as PRDs. In order for a PRD to be developed along Broadbridge Avenue, which is part of current single family zones RS-3 and RS-4, a minimum lot size is one acre (43,560 s.f.) is required according to the proposal. Currently, this area is completely built out and occupied by one to two-story residential uses. This corridor serves as one of the key bus transit corridors for the town. Allowing a slight increase in residential density here could further help boost transit ridership and promote investment of financial resources for a more reliable and frequent transit service in this area. However, allowing parcels of more than an acre nearby would cause multifamily developments to encroach into existing single family neighborhoods of the town.

Data Analysis

Census data shows that 77% of Stratford's housing stock is comprised of single-family homes, of which 60% have three or more bedrooms. Increasing housing costs coupled with a lack of modestly sized housing inventory therefore does not satisfy the needs of downsizing baby boomers, startup families, and young adults, who are in need of the missing middle (income) housing. Nearly 60% of Stratford's renters are currently cost-burdened paying more than 30% of their incomes on housing costs.

"Multifamily housing can help meet the housing needs of people seeking to reduce housing costs, have access to amenities, be closer to other people, simplify their living arrangements, and/or who may be struggling with property maintenance", as discussed within the recently adopted *Housing Strategies of Stratford* document (Page 15). A survey conducted by the Stratford Housing Partnership on the state of housing in the town in 2021 revealed that the majority of the participants were supportive of a strategic approach to promoting multifamily housing such as, near transit stations or bus lines.

The Stratford Planning Commission analyzed the applicability of existing Section 5.3 regulation (on Residence Apartments) during Planning Commission meetings of December 2018- February 2019. A copy of the staff report highlighting this analysis is enclosed with this report. Based on this analysis, it is clear that the current regulation has become obsolete since the overall equivalents (bedrooms) cap of 100 for each neighborhood as allowed by the regulation has already been reached a few years ago. Also, the equivalents permitted in each neighborhood are based on old school district boundaries which no longer exist.

Recently prepared school enrollment trends analysis for Stratford indicates that there has been an enrollment loss of 7.2 percent in Stratford from 2009-2019, and it is further expected to decrease a little more than 8 percent from 2019 to 2029.

([https://www.stratfordk12.org/uploaded/District/Demographics_and_Enrollment_Analysis/Stratford_2019_\(1\)_Prowda_Analysis.pdf](https://www.stratfordk12.org/uploaded/District/Demographics_and_Enrollment_Analysis/Stratford_2019_(1)_Prowda_Analysis.pdf))

The provision of multifamily housing in targeted areas of the town, would therefore not extend the capacity of existing schools, and/or place undue burden on school infrastructure and resources.

Staff Recommendations

1. For the sake of clarity and ease of implementing the proposed regulation, the proposed PRD zone boundary should be re-defined as follows:
 - A. Within any existing Two-Family District (RM-1)
 - B. All single-family residential districts (RS-3 or RS-4) fronting on Broadbridge Avenue between Barnum Avenue (to the south) and Emerald Place (to the north)

This would also ensure that the proposed multifamily development does not encroach into existing single family zones and direct such developments only within the existing RM-1 zone and only in parcels fronting Broadbridge Avenue, which serves as a bus transit corridor for the town.

For those parcels fronting on Broadbridge Avenue, mixed use PRDs (with a mix of commercial and residential uses) should be encouraged to promote vitality on the street front.

2. In order to encourage developments that are compatible in design and style with the preferred development character of the neighborhood, the maximum proposed building height should not exceed 35 feet, as opposed to the recommended 40 feet within the proposed PRD regulation.

3. Standards for setbacks, distance between buildings on site, and maximum allowable density should be recommended so that there is no ambiguity in the implementation of the PRD regulation during a Special Case review process recommended within the proposed PRD regulation.

A slide deck showing visuals of various densities and development types, along with an analysis of current density in the existing RM-1 neighborhood is enclosed along with this report. Based on this, a maximum density range of 15-18 dwelling units per acre may be ideal for the proposed PRD zone locations in the town. Setbacks of proposed PRD developments should be required to adhere to the current required setbacks of existing RM-1/RS-3/RS-4 zones (in which the new multifamily developments will be located) so that new buildings are setback along the same line as the existing buildings in the vicinity.

4. Where sidewalks cannot be accommodated due to wider streets and no sidewalks in the neighboring area, payment in lieu of sidewalks should be encouraged.
5. Onsite property maintenance manager should be mandated for such developments so that these developments are well maintained.
6. In addition to the above, all new developments proposed within the PRD zone are subject to the review of the Town's Architectural Review Board (ARB) and should adhere to the recommendations of the ARB so as to ensure that the proposed designs are compatible with the preferred design character of the neighborhoods in which they are located.

Consistency with the Town Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD)

The proposal is consistent with the following recommendations of the POCD:

Land Use

- *Update the Town of Stratford Zoning Code to reflect the Future Land Use Plan that will provide for increased development opportunities in appropriate areas, protect the character of neighborhoods, and maintain the town's important waterfront and open spaces*
- *Update the Zoning Code to facilitate planned developments (mixed use)*

Housing

- *Consider a variety of housing types available in town during the development review process*

Sustainability

- *Update the town's zoning to provide for sustainable development patterns that support density, walkability and conservation*

In addition to these, the proposal is also consistent with the recently adopted *Housing Strategies of Stratford* document (adopted as an amendment to the POCD) as shown below:

10.4. Enable Smaller Scale Multi-Family Housing

1. *Consider modifying the zoning regulations to encourage or allow smaller scale multifamily developments which:*

- *Fall in between single-family housing and large-scale multi-family developments*
- *Might include the following types of housing while maintaining the scale and/or appearance of residential homes/buildings:*
 - *Two-family dwelling*
 - *Three-family dwelling*

- *Four-family dwelling*
- *5+ unit building*
- *Townhouses*

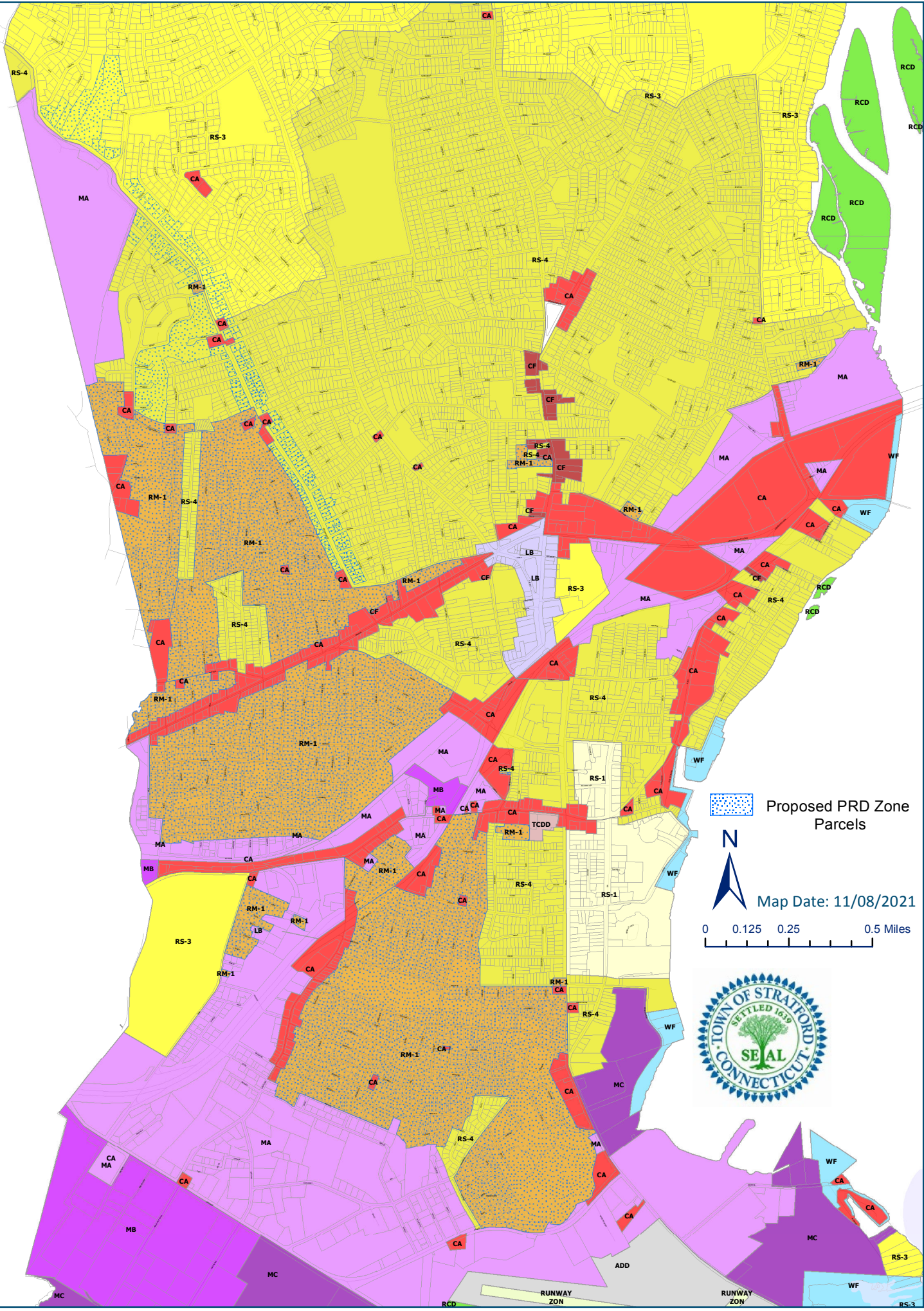
- *Courtyard apartments*
- *Cottage court*
- *Live-work units*


The proposal is also consistent with the Future Land Use map of the POCD since all of the parcels proposed to be included in the PRD are envisioned to be part of high density residential or medium density uses.


Conclusion

As discussed earlier, the proposed PRD would benefit the town in developing the missing middle housing, identified as currently lacking within the *Housing Strategies of Stratford* document. The Commission may choose to recommend a maximum density that is appropriate for such developments based on the existing density in the surrounding neighborhood to avoid out of scale developments in the new PRD zone. The Commission should also pay due consideration to the afore-mentioned staff recommendations so that the proposed regulation is easy to implement and fit well with the preferred character of the neighborhoods in which they are located.

-Susmitha Attota, AICP
Town Planner



 Proposed PRD Zone
Parcels

 Map Date: 11/08/2021

0 0.125 0.25 0.5 Miles

